

# Caregiver Connection

July 2010

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.  
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION



## Safety tips to keep children injury-free during "trauma season"

**Preventable injuries claim the lives of more than 2,000 children each summer**

*Michelle Nunez, Child Safety Educator, Mary Bridge Children's Hospital*

This summer, children ages 14 and under will be rushed to emergency rooms nearly 3 million times for serious injuries resulting from motor vehicle crashes, drownings, bike crashes, pedestrian incidents, falls and other hazards. In the injury prevention community, summer is also known as 'trauma season' because of the dramatic increase in the number of children injured from May through August. Sadly, by the end of this summer, more than 2,000 children will die because of injuries that could have been prevented."

**Caregivers should keep these tips in mind so safety stays a top priority this summer:**

- Actively supervise your child when engaging in summertime activities, such as swimming and playing on playgrounds and backyards.
- Use the appropriate safety gear for your child's activities, such as a helmet for wheeled sports and sporting activities, a car seat or booster seat as appropriate, and a life jacket for open water swimming and boating.
- Role model proper safety behavior. Children are more likely to follow safety rules when they see their parents doing so.
- If you have a pool or a spa, it should be surrounded on all four sides by a fence at least four feet high with self-closing, self-latching gates, and it should be equipped with an anti-entrapment drain cover and safety vacuum release system. An inflatable pool needs to be surrounded by a fence, just like any other pool, and caregivers need to empty these pools when not in use.
- Make sure your home playground is safe. Keep 12 inches safe surfacing, such as mulch, shredded rubber or fine sand, extending at least six feet in all directions around the equipment. Remove hood and neck drawstrings from your child's clothing.
- Install window guards/locks and keep furniture away from windows.
- Remove potential poisons from your yard, including poisonous plants, pesticides and pool chemicals.

## 1624 Statewide Regional Foster Parent Representatives

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## Meet Wanda and Shaun *and a house full of kids*

Team is a word that Wanda uses often.

When she uses that word, she might be referring to the people she “couldn’t do it without” – Her husband, Shaun, and her eldest daughter Nicole – or it could be the team of the whole family together...that would be all ten of them. Or it might be the partnership she feels with the birth families of the children in her home, or with the staff she works with at the Toppenish DCFS office.

When Wanda and Shaun married ten years ago, Wanda had three children. They knew they wanted to have a family together, but that family would need to come through adoption. That set them on the path of being licensed as a foster home six years ago. They were particularly interested in infants, and they wanted to be a resource for Tribal children in their community. The first baby to enter their home was there only a short period of time, but the second one, Dazina, is still there and about to have her adoption completed. And over the years about 28 others have been through the Veasaphen home as well. “It’s hard to say no,” says Wanda....a trait not uncommon among foster families. Most of those children eventually moved back home, but Wanda is passionate about the relationships she forms with the birth families. Those relationships continue long after the placement ends.

Wanda tells of a baby placed with her while the brothers remained at home with their father. When that baby returned home, “I got two additional sons and their father as part of my family.” The father made it clear that if anything happened to him, he wanted Shaun and Wanda to raise his children. When he died, Tremaine, 10, Erica, 5, and Andrew, 4, became a permanent part of the family. The last one, Marcel, was a newborn in the hospital when Wanda got the call three years ago. “Can I just go look?” she asked Shaun. Needless to say, Marcel’s adoption is currently in process as well.

When you add Wanda’s older children – that’s Nicole, 23, Raymond, 20, and Joshua, 18 – that’s ten all together. Nicole is Wanda’s respite provider and has truly been indispensable in making it all work.

All of their activities are pretty much family activities. They go to the mountains and to the beach. The kids like to swim and ride bikes. A big part of their family activities is attending pow-wows. They all like watching the dancing, and sometimes Tremaine dances too.

Wanda says they have taken their last foster child. Their family is complete. “But I wouldn’t change this experience for the world. I was meant to do this,” she adds. Shaun and Wanda see each of the children who have come through their home as a blessing...



You can too.

## 2106 planning needs your input

Regional meetings are being held this summer to provide information and hear from you about CA’s response to HB 2106.

Look for a letter in the mail from Denise Revels Robinson, Children’s Administration Assistant Secretary. You can attend a meeting in your own region, or any meeting that is convenient to you. We hope to see you there, as your input is important to us!

### REGION 1

June 24 Moses Lake Fire Station • 701 E 3rd • 6:30pm

July 27 Spokane DCFS • 1313 N Atlantic St, #2000 • noon

### REGION 2

June 22 Richland IRS • 825 Jadwin Ave • 11:00am

### REGION 3

TBD Emmanuel Baptist Church

Mt Vernon • 1515 E College Way • 6:00pm

July 13 Mill Creek Foursquare Church

1415 164th St SW • 6:00pm

### REGION 4

June 9 Kent DCFS • 1313 W Meeker, #102 • 6:30pm

### REGION 5

June 16 Silverdale Comm Center • 9729 Silverdale Way • 6:00pm

July 6 Tacoma Sizzler • 100th & S Tacoma Way • 7:00pm

### REGION 6

July 7 Kelso DCFS • 711 Vine • 6:30pm

For more information about these meetings, contact Dinah Martin, [Dinah.martin@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:Dinah.martin@dshs.wa.gov), 360-902-0740.

For more information about HB 2106, contact David DelVillar Fox, [david.delvillarfox@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:david.delvillarfox@dshs.wa.gov), 360-902-8016, or April. [potts@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:potts@dshs.wa.gov), 360-902-0213.

## Foster parent and caregiver support line

### 1-800-301-1868

Effective July 1, 2010, the Foster Parent and Caregiver Support Line will be answered by Children’s Administration (CA) Central Intake staff.

Since 2007, contractors have provided support to caregivers through this line. However, CA has evaluated the program and found that nearly 75% of calls to the contracted support line were routed to Central Intake for case specific consultation. Calling Central Intake directly for help will reduce the number of calls you have to make when you need it after hours. CA will reinvest the money from this contract into your regional foster parent and caregiver support contracts.

You can call the support line between 4:30pm- 8:00am Monday through Friday and 24 hours a day on weekends and holidays. The support line is for emergencies that can’t wait until the next business day. The social worker answering the call can help trouble shoot behavior issues, problem solving, and conflict management. Callers may choose to be anonymous.

We hope this change will help us better serve you and the children in your care.

To access the Foster Parent and Caregiver Support Line call 1-800-301-1868.

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- Walk all the way around a parked vehicle to check for children before entering a car and starting the motor. Don't let children play in driveways, streets, parking lots or unfenced yards adjacent to busy streets.
- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle, even with the window slightly open. As summer approaches and temperatures soar, check for sleeping children before leaving a vehicle. A child's body heats up three to five times faster than an adult's, making them more susceptible to heat stroke – even on a day with mild temperatures.
- Apply sunscreen rated SPF 15 or higher to your child's exposed skin 15 to 30 minutes before going out, and reapply frequently.
- Make sure your child drinks plenty of water. A child who seems tired or achy should rest in the shade or go inside for a while. Get immediate medical help any time a child's skin is hot to the touch (with or without perspiration), if a child has a seizure, or if they become disoriented in hot weather.

Active supervision, proper protective gear, and other simple prevention steps will help your child avoid danger. For more information about summer safety visit [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org).

Michelle Nunez is a child safety educator at the Center for Childhood Safety at Mary Bridge Children's Hospital in Tacoma, WA and the coordinator for Safe Kids Pierce County – a local coalition that focuses on preventing accidental injury for children under 14. Mary Bridge Children's Hospital is the proud lead organization for Safe Kids Pierce County.

Visit [www.multicare.org/childhoodsafety](http://www.multicare.org/childhoodsafety).



Post Adoption **Support**

## New FREE resource!

Adoptive parents now have access to an online lending library made possible through the collaborative efforts of the states of Washington, Alaska and Oregon and Northwest Resource Associates. The Lending Library offers books, tapes, and training materials for Washington state foster parents, adoptive parents, and kinship providers to check out. The materials will be mailed to you in a re-usable pouch with postage pre-paid by DSHS for the return of the materials.

You can access this website to register <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/onGoinglendinglibrary.asp> or call 1-877-517-0820.

## Supports for foster parents

A primary resource for support is your child's social worker. They can answer questions about mileage, reimbursement, rates and other system issues, or put you in touch with someone who can.

**If you need support beyond that, here are some resources:**

- You are eligible for two days of "retention respite" a month and you can bank up to 14 days to take at once. Using respite is a good way to take a break and re-charge your batteries.
- If you need help after normal work hours, you can call the Foster Parent and Relative Caregiver Support Line: 1-800-301-1861. The Foster Parents Association of Washington State (FPAWS) also has a support line. It is 1-800-391-2273.
- If you need neutral third-party advice for investigation of allegations of abuse or neglect or a licensing violation you can call the FIRST line: 253-219-6782.
- You can look for other foster parents or relative caregivers who are sharing your experiences. Just talking to them can help you remember you are not alone. And maybe you will also find that you can share other things – like child care, or help with transportation.
- Throughout the state, caregiver support groups are available. For relative caregivers, they are usually organized by the local Area Agency on Aging. For foster parents, they have been put together by private agencies under contracts with the state. These agencies also have foster parent liaisons who can provide assistance and advice.
  - In Regions 3 and 4 (King, Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom, San Juan and Island counties) contact Ruth Graham at 206-605-0664 for information.
  - In Region 5, Pierce and Kitsap counties, contact Elizabeth Griffin Hall, 360-990-9955
  - In Region 6, which includes all other western Washington counties contact Alisa Moore 206-947-7893.
  - In Region 1, which includes eastern Washington from the Canadian border to the Columbia River (Spokane, Wenatchee, Clarkston, Colville, Moses Lake, Omak, Colville), contact Dru Powers, 509-928-6697.
  - In Region 2, which is central Washington from the Canadian border to the Columbia River (Ellensburg, Yakima, Toppenish, Sunnyside, Tri-cities, Walla Walla) contact Sara Clark, 509-735-6446
- Foster parents can help ensure their voice is heard through the Foster Parent 1624 Consultation Committee.

These meetings bring together foster parents and Children's Administration to work on important issues. For information about representatives on the committee, contact Dinah Martin, [dinah.martin@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:dinah.martin@dshs.wa.gov) or 360-902-0740, or find them listed in the Caregiver Connection.

## Regional Contacts

### Region 1 – Spokane

Jan Lammers 509-363-3383  
Pam Copeland 509-363-3379

### Region 2 – Yakima

Steve Bergland 509-454-6924

### Region 3 – Everett

Natalie Trigsted 425-339-1762  
Linda Richardson 425-339-3998

### Region 4 – Bellevue

Evie Shiveley 425-590-3072  
Jennette Norris 425-590-3069

### Region 5 – Tacoma

Cindy Anderson 253-983-6359  
Laura Davis 253-983-6281

### Region 6 – Tumwater

Cheryl Barrett 360-725-6758  
Kim Mower 360-725-6778

### Headquarters – Olympia

Lonnie Locke 360-902-7932

**Toll free number:** 1-800-562-5682  
(listen carefully to the recorded message)



# Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

## ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

**Family Help Line:** 1-800-932-HOPE or [www.parenttrust.org](http://www.parenttrust.org). The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

**Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect:** Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

**Mental Health Crisis Line Information:** The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

## GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or [www.fpaws.org](http://www.fpaws.org). FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

## RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

## CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve

<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.



# Compassion fatigue

## HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

(OPRAH.com) – The next time someone dreams up a new superhero, she should be wielding a bedpan. And Kleenex. And band-aids and travel Scrabble.

As any of the more than 50 million Americans caring for a needy child or elder knows, the task requires superhuman strength and patience – and loads of compassion.

Given the constant demands on your time and energy – for months or years on end – as well as the stress and frustration involved, having large reserves of empathy is crucial. Yet as strange as it sounds, all that empathy can backfire, flooding you with the other person's pain, and leaving you exhausted, angry, even unable to care anymore. No one likes to talk about these feelings; they seem selfish, shameful, and indecent. They take a toll, however - physicians have come to call this compassion fatigue.

Unlike burnout, which is caused by the stresses of everyday work, compassion fatigue results from taking on the emotional burden of another person's pain. In a way, it's similar to post-traumatic stress disorder, except that the stress is a reaction to the trauma of another. As with PTSD, symptoms include irritability, disturbed sleep, outbursts of anger, intrusive thoughts, and a desire to avoid anything to do with the person's struggle.

For the millions of ordinary people who become caregivers, the most important way to prevent compassion fatigue is simply to recognize that it can occur. "It means saying to others, 'This is really getting to me, not because I'm weak or inept, but because it's a difficult situation.'" Caring for yourself may seem like a low priority while trying to care for another – but it's essential.

## Five ways to help yourself

When you're caring for someone, practicing self-awareness and self-care can help you maintain your boundaries; this, in turn, allows you to be fully compassionate without being consumed by the other person's pain. Consider:

- Mindfulness meditation: It's been shown to decrease depression and anxiety while boosting empathy.
- Keeping a journal: Research suggests that reflective writing helps prevent compassion fatigue.
- A daily act of self-centering: Set an alarm for noon and take four deep breaths; or when you wash your hands, sink into the experience, feeling the sensation of the water on your skin while noting, "I am worthy of my own time."
- Staying connected to the outside world with at least a phone call every day. Better yet, get outside, even just to take a walk.
- And don't be afraid to ask for help.

*Edited from an article by Tim Jarvis from O, The Oprah Magazine © 2009*